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VALUE THEORY

ECONOFICTION MARX, MARXISM, VALUE, VALUE THEORY, VALUE-FORM

The actualization of value depends on material, symbolic money, which as the counterpart of value – counterpart, insofar as money nourishes the illusion of being able to give crisisless form to the potentially infinite of exploitation – affirms and actualizes its assertiveness in the price form. To this end, it seems necessary that potentially profitable products, with regard to their realization in the context of commodity-money transactions, possess a quality – value – that is different from their utility value dimension and their objectivity and at the same time all of them share – for the sake of comparability. As Lyotard writes in *Der Widerstreit*, the subjective evaluation of actors cannot provide any basis for the fact that, for example, person A actually exchanges the quantity x of a product for the quantity y of another product of person B equivalent to the quantity x of another product of person B, because a general consensus on a measure of value is already required here, which, however, immediately raises the question of equivalence again: How can the two persons actually know that they evaluate the two products equally? (Cf. Lyotard 1989: 286) Even recourse to prices cannot solve the problem, since prices behave “like temperature degrees to heat” with regard to value. And according to Lyotard, Marx’s recourse to the average and socially necessary abstract working time contained in the goods implies the danger of the establishment of a production metaphysics that requires the invention of a third party qualified as a substance or conceived as an essentialist measure, as traditional Marxism has also demonstrated a thousand times in the course of its labour value metaphysics. With our reference to Bahr and Ruben it could only be shown so far that with the axiom of equivalence the relation of equivalence is set – each commodity as a material object is qualitatively different from another object, but with regard to the internal relations it deals with the same commodities in so far as an “equality” is presumed with respect to the value, and thus the commodities appear as a concrete expression of the coincidence of diversity and identity – neither nor and as well as.

If one wants to define the goods as equivalent, then one apparently cannot avoid attributing to them a common quality or a common characteristic. As quantitatively comparable goods, the products which are qualitatively different and determined in different quantities should have something in common with one another, which Marx initially determines as the logically third, i.e. as value. Oliver Schlaudt cites an example from mathematics with regard to a common property: Two straight lines running in parallel have the same direction (as common property), whereby this scheme is an abstraction definition, as it was introduced into mathematical logic by the mathematician Guiseppe Peano in 1894. (Cf. Schlaudt 2011: 265) It was Bertrand Russel who succinctly

expressed this formalization with the terms of set theory: "The number of a set is the set of all its equivalent sets. (Russell o.J.: 55/56) Or to put it another way, "if two things are proportional to quantitative equality, then they have the same size. "1 For Marx, commodity values are represented as qualitatively equal, insofar as they can be measured in money, and thus they are also quantitatively comparable. (MEW 23: 109) That the expression of value is to be understood as an absurd property of the relations in the relation of equality (with which it does not imply an external relation to the relations, but exposes an internal relation), justifies Schlaudt with the recourse to a scholastic-inspired definition of abstraction: The abstraction of value as a determination of relation always refers to a pair of concepts, whereby that which is abstracted, namely value, and that from which is abstracted, are related to each other. (Schlaudt 2011: 266) Consequently, Schlaudt then describes value in a purely conceptual manner as the difference between what appears – which refers from the outset to something like an "underlying" context (abstract work) – and appearance or exchange value, which in turn occurs as the plurality of exchange values that are already equivalently recognized. (ibid.: 269) Value and value magnitude here are based on abstract work – this determination, which Marx allegedly makes, certainly cannot be differentiated by reintroducing the well-known distinction between appearance/exchange value and appearance/being/being/value. In this context, Michael Heinrich also makes use of philosophical reflections on consciousness in order to underpin his own position: the value of the goods is to be understood as "figurative reflection of a certain social relationship of their producers", whereby this relationship can only be understood in can only appear in the relationship from commodity to money. (Heinrich 2003: 242) Ultimately, the concept of value functions here as a reflexive determinant. Consequently, value would have to be understood as the objective reflection of a relationship that can also be described as a value quantity plus its numerical expression (exchange value), whereby Heinrich actually also speaks of the expression of the value quantity in the price, so that at least at this point a quantified determination of value is made. (ibid.: 243) But if values only become such in the circulation, how is it possible to speak of quantity at all beyond the realization in the act of purchase, Harald Strauß asks at this point (Strauß 2013: 248), whereupon Heinrich would probably immediately have the (tautological) answer ready that values, independent of (quantified) prices, are not given at all. However, even in Heinrich's case, the problem of value does not revolve purely around quantifiability, because he assumes in particular that there is no conceptual identity of price and value. For Heinrich, with regard to the problem of the reflexive determinant of value and its phenomena (relation of goods to money, price), it is above all a matter of two different conceptual levels of abstraction, whereby price expresses value/value size, although there is no conceptual adequation relationship between value and price. For Heinrich, "the categories of value and added value are conceptually logical prerequisites for understanding the categories of profit and production price. (Heinrich 2003: 282) The categories of value and added value are thus not ultimately decisive as quantitative categories, but express "on an abstract level the formal content of the exchange between capital and labour". (ibid.: 282) Now a "monetary value theory" must not ignore, so Büttner adds as a "correction" to Heinrich that in circulation can only appear what was previously objectified as working time in the goods, whereby the objective validity of the spent working time comes about only through the realization of goods and thus each product is to be understood only as potential value. (Cf. Büttner 2013) For Büttner, there is a logical connection between the production and circulation spheres that cannot be eliminated in favour of one side or the other. One should, however, question from the outset the logic of reflection with which one wants to get hold of the value and the corresponding incompleteness of the economy, which can neither easily be symbolized nor represented, both in the circulating-oriented arguing position such as that of Heinrich as well as in the production-oriented representations such as those of Büttner or Kurz.

Contrary to the logical determination of reflection and thus the foundation of the value qua abstract work in a reason, we now alternatively discuss the non-concept of value by including the axioms of semiotic mathesis. At this point Harald Strauß rightly points out once again that the discursive representation or the expression of the forms of value I-IV does not lead to any solution with regard to a logically consistent development of the forms of value, from the form of money to the form of capital, so that the reason for determining value (value/value size expresses itself in prices) in this context would also remain essentially indeterminate. (Cf. Strauß 2013: 236f.) Also the tracking down of a (nonsensical) property – value – common to the goods, as Schlaudt demonstrates this in reference to the scholastic definition of abstraction (cf. Schlaudt 2011: 266), cannot resolve the dilemma, because here social constitutional problems are addressed that articulate themselves in the question of how comparability can be produced at all by means of money as an external measure that is related to the constituent of comparability, namely to abstract work as an immanent measure of value. The formulation that the immanent measure of value is abstract working time immediately raises this question, which is then usually answered by the fact that money is again a necessary manifestation of the immanent value, with which the expression of labour always takes place within the scope of money. Thus the problem of value inevitably arises in all sharpness, which Marx, if, for example, Kugelman refers to the essence of value, does not want to answer purely by chance, yes Marx – as Hans-Joachim Lenger has shown in his interpretation of the Marx letter to Kugelman (Lenger 2004: 94f.) – even reacts with extreme irritation to the question of the origin of value (in work), because it leads him dangerously close to Hegel's theory of the absolute spirit, which in its theory is that nothing is owed to its circular movement, because old debts are always already paid off when new ones are taken up, for example, but they are always presented as the old ones. On the other hand, for the all-round relationship that the goods assume as products of private labor in exchange for each other, the value at most gives off something like an ideal "horizon", in front of which the heterogeneous products inevitably assume an exchange value, and every attribution to values takes place, as Lenger rightly remarked, at first ex post, and in this respect the exchange value represents "a non-present presence of the 'value', which asserts itself by unfolding a posteriori as a game of prices. (ibid.: 99). The shift from an intrinsic property (value as the objectification of abstract work) to an extrinsic property (value as the objective reflection of a specific social relationship of producers that appears in the relationship between the price of goods and money) is thus unable to really solve the problem of value. Price cannot be applied to value like

rods to the original meter, as Harald Strauß pointed out. (Strauß 2013: 248) Although Oliver Schlaudt suggests that the term “absolute value” as an unmeasurable measure, which assigns its measure to all other concepts of economy, does not function so easily, because the value is already beyond any positive determinability, insofar as a general quantity of work cannot be calculated even in the smallest given period of time, it is precisely for this reason that reflection concepts are switched over to as a basis for value and prices, which, however, only shift the problem by the value. For the economy of relative values cannot be caught up reflexively in order to subordinate it to an onto economy, but rather the economy of symbol and expression iterates and processes, as we have already seen several times, as difference, which repeats itself, among other things, also as modification, translation error and non-simultaneity, although these repetitions in the capitalist economy, whatever the cost, should prove to be linear-homogeneous developments and yet do not.

We assume in this paper that the value is a paradoxical un-ject, insofar as this un-ject possesses the quality of having no quality (Fuchs 2011: 110), it is according to Fuchs quodditas without quidditas. Thus no being, subject or object can be attributed to value, and therefore it can only be regarded as an indeterminate reason for determination, which in turn is distinguished from the abyss, the double abyss, that of not finding place and not being more (and the abyss, in contrast to the object in Kristeva, the decomposer that triggers disgust or fear). In the course of the history of Western metaphysics, which presents the existence of the existing as the first reason, this was given as many names as the position of critique, which laments or accuses the misjudgment of a place of refuge (for philosophy): God, reason, logos, subject, objectivity, history, substance, will, proletariat, etc. However, the return of everything that exists [and all being (-being)] to a first principle or to a reason for (philosophical) modernity is no longer sufficient. Thus, for example, deconstruction aims at the weakening of the reason, more precisely at the adoption of a final reason, so that at this point a contingency consciousness emerges, which in turn under the rubric of plural or contingent reasons can assume many kinds of transcendentalisms (event, freedom, différence), possibly also the transcendence of a necessary incompleteness of the social under the open-ended shadow of antagonism, necessary because otherwise plural reasons could in turn give the reason for a final reason. Under the condition of unfathomability, therefore, the plural reasons persevere in conflictual attempts at foundation, no matter how temporary and partial, institutional and non-institutional “solutions” for the social are conceived. The absence of last reasons attributed to modernity thus does not mean to doubt the necessity of necessarily contingent reasons, and a certain social theory wants to take this into account by assigning to the ultimate unfathomability of the social its ultimate abyss, the symptoms of which are located in the game of differences, e.g. between politics and the political. This argumentation is in a certain proximity to Ernesto Laclau’s theory of the social, according to which society cannot come to itself because it has no fixed foundation or reason from which it could constitute itself, which is why it is never possible to conclude the form of society. Society as totality cannot be represented – no part, no classno group, yes, no identity succeeds in claiming for itself to formulate society as truth, because society necessarily remains blind to itself. In contrast to certain system theorists – for Peter Fuchs society is unattainable, for Niklas Luhmann it is not addressable – Laclau’s society, as an impossible object, constantly (tends to) produce empty signifiers, because it cannot set itself as the difference that sets differences. The signifier emptied of all concrete meanings signifies the metonymic signification system as such, which can now in principle be represented by each element emptied of meaning itself, without this, however, being capable of producing or embodying universality to perfection. Thus society remains open to particular interpretations, ideologies and discourses and thus to contingency (cf. Marchart 2013: 298ff.) With Laclau, the political is the area that makes the paradoxical attempt to symbolize the inaccessibility of society and the impossibility of community by using particular contents to represent universality, at least temporarily. Society oscillates between impossibility and totalization, its abundance is absent and at the same time present in the attempt to impose social totalization. In antagonism, the boundary of social objectivity possesses a form of discursive articulation (partial fixation of differential elements), insofar as the game of differences requires at least a certain degree of equivalence: Laclau thinks the latter radically negatively, i.e. through equivalence something is indicated that is not the object. If the oppressed and oppressors enter into a relationship of equivalence, then this discursive principle exists only as pure negativity, for from both perspectives the respective identity is determined negatively, i.e. only with respect to the other class do the differences of one’s own class become secondary and thus recognizable as equivalence. (ibid.: 310) If Laclau now concludes that particularity denies totality and at the same time requires it, that he thus adheres to arbitrary reasons, he misses the problem of the undefined reason in two respects: firstly, he conceives the socio-critical theory entirely under the primacy of politics (and the political) and secondly, he “dialects” this problem while retaining the concept of totality, whereby society on the one hand represents an impossible object, but on the other hand the indispensable reason of any social objectivity remains the indispensable reason of all social objectivity. For us, however, the problem of the indefinite reason continues to insist here, insofar as the value cannot represent the economy just like an empty signifier. And value “is” neither, nor “is” not, and as such it slips away from any observer. It still stands outside the ontic-ontological difference. In the same way, with the value as an un-ject, any duality of being / not-being is radically eliminated. The indefinite reason can actually be described as the great problem of all modern ontologies, which was not satisfactorily discursified by Hegel, Schelling, Wittgenstein, Heidegger and Badiou, among others. Moreover, Harald Strauß’s reference to a virtual sphere of value, the entry into processes of temporalization of which is to take place as an “instantaneous transformation” (Strauß 2013: 243), whereby the value never arrives in time but stands still in the temporal processes, fits seamlessly into this problematic. In the end, the presence of the reason is somehow perpetuated. Or, however, one shifts the basic justification to the problem itself, which contains the difference between being (reason) and being (reason). Thus Heidegger also writes: “By the repetition of a basic problem we understand the opening up of its original, hitherto hidden possibilities, through the elaboration of which it is transformed and thus preserved only in its problem content. But to preserve a problem means to keep it free and awake in those inner forces that make it possible as a problem in its essence”. (Heidegger 1991: 204)

But it is even more precisely a question of a paradoxical or undefined, absent and yet at the same time determining reason that (co)constitutes the economic problem. Or, to put it another way, the indeterminate reason, value, is neither being nor nothing; rather, it is the indeterminate “force”, which, by referring to the pure relationship of goods, money and capital, gives determination.

Commodity prices are subject to quantitative differentiation only on the basis of equivalence, with which the goods have a very strange, empty quality, with respect to which they can be defined first and foremost as “equal”. Value. Value is with its unqualified quality, equivalence, equal to the unqualified reason for capital, it “gives” the pure that of commodity, money and capital, whereby also from the latter every meaning, content, reference and thematicity is subtracted, so that capital already distinguishes the same extended reproduction. As always the same autoreferential process, capital generates the topology of the social by inserting the outside as far as possible into its interior, it synthesizes the outside by trying to bind and integrate any exogenous conflicts and tensions in order to possibly make capital out of them. If the multiple registers of exteriority are bound, then we are dealing with capital as extimacy (Fuchs 2001: 103), a system in which every outside circulates as its outside within its interior. Value for such a system cannot be imagined as being at all, with which it would only be ontologized again, rather it is to be understood as radically present-absence. He does not rule monocratically within the system, but he rumbles, so to speak, in the system with all its monstrosity, he hyper-functions for it like an axiomatic resource, which is not one, because it assumes no presence or essence. And this results precisely from the fact that as a value-setting value he remains alone with himself – as a precondition of himself – with which at the same time his “worthlessness” is indicated. (Cf. Schwengel 1977: 198) Precisely because value is so hopelessly unattainable, it produces effects. Although the value does not exist, it insists in the economy. And if you like, this corresponds to the fact that in developed capitalism bourgeois relations of production with their connotations to the “real economy”, which is assigned work as the decisive determinant by labor value theory, have lost their primary validity. Finally, value as an undetermined reason that opens up the possibility of shifting value forms first and foremost remains on the one hand separated from value expression, and on the other insists on being split in value expression, which itself does not lead to isolation. His presentation (Husserl) constitutes the presence of value expressions without showing itself completely in them. The value as an undetermined reason reveals as its field of action the capitalist structure, which, however, cannot be derived from it. The complexity of the capitalistically structured whole – in the broadest sense its form – makes any question about a privileged element, the content, obsolete. Although the value is presupposed for capitalist reproduction, at the same time a constitutive sustainability remains inherent in it: It manifests itself only a posteriori how and what has unfolded and realized itself as capital in price form in certain periods, how it can be “grasped” only insufficiently, how capital will interpret itself in the future. And to this extent, even a simulation of the future through the value, which only happens so that it can present itself, can only appear through all ecstasies as broken or illusory, because the value will not catch up with its own preconditions, insofar as difference precedes it as it divides it. Thus, the worthlessness of value touches the limit of every definition or conceptual representation. As this indeterminate reason, however, value remains necessary because, among other things, every interdependence theory of prices has so far simply been unable to answer the question of what prices are supposed to express. The indifference of value as an undetermined reason, which at the same time expresses itself through the meaningless differentiations of capital, is, by the way, in a strange and at the same time hostile neighborhood to the indifference of the real, of “being-nothing” as determining-in-the-last instance.

Value, if one conceives one's concept as abstraction from any reference, would perhaps be close to Deleuze's derivation of the difference from the difference as pure difference. This, in turn, would make it possible to treat the constitutional question in capitalism as a quasi-transcendental problem of capital, insofar as abstract multiplicity or the total complexity (of capital) remains coupled to various empirical causal mechanisms. (Cf. Žižek 2005: 45f.) The virtual value indicates that every actualization is burdened with contingency. We therefore speak of quasi-transcendenceality, and the non-economy must reassure itself of this, whereby every transcendental philosophy that seeks first reasons or principles and must also assert them is radically transformed into a (non-)philosophy. And as in the quasi-transcendental fractions, interruptions and logics of the concept of value also indicates a “logic” that eludes representation, because this “logic” is the result of the differential accumulation of plural capital as well as its prerequisites. Thus, through the actions of individual capitals, the overall context of capital is always also followed by a posteriori compatibility, which indicates the quasi-transcendental as the effect of an effect. Quasi-Transcendentalism indicates that the theory of (real) conditions of possibility remains referred to historical conditions of origin and validity, which, however, does not affect the scope of the theory. And the value will ever be revealed belatedly, even if capital tries to occupy the future in order to offer the value a representation. Therefore, in relation to value, it can always be assumed that there is a “transcendental homelessness” (Lenger 2004: 10) of the economy, of their trauma, insofar as it is never certain whether any calculation and planning goals of capitalization, however differentiated and fractalized they may be, can be adhered to, with which the value can be written down only in the “time horizon” of Futur 2, the “it will have been”, because only a posteriori can price movements also be subjected to a definitive valuation in the future. Only in all retrospectiveness does the value jump on, does it indicate what it will have been. And at the same time, the non-presence of value is already tied to a futurized and futurizing virtualization-updating dynamic, whereby there is no guarantee whatsoever that money will realize any purchases and sales of goods in circulation. And yet capitalism is constantly about demanding the ubiquitous presence of value, for at any moment, exploitation is to take place everywhere. But the so-called value law is ever threatened by the risk, by contingency, which tends to eliminate the consistency and coherence of every planning generality, and this already on the level of the organization, and thus not only the “blind spot” of the economic itself shows itself, but the impossibility of being able to say something definite about the value, unless it turns out to be a circling around the unspoken. As an indeterminate reason, the

value would therefore always have to be written crossed out – even before the value can be determined, it is ever left to its indeterminability. If thus blindness is in a certain way the condition of the possibility of economy, then the value in its unassailable shiftedness is equal to the eye, which can only see when it does not see itself, or, to put it another way, all differences and distinctions, which are initiated by the value, require further operations of the same kind, and this costs time. This happens today in the mode of “whatever the cost” in order to come ever closer to the (unconscious) teleology of capital, which consists in moving production and circulation time towards zero, without ever being able to reach the goal.

If one distinguishes space by means of the inside, the outside and the boundary, that is, if it is the result of a tetradic relation, then its problematic dimension lies in the boundary, which obviously means that space is to be thought of simultaneously as temporalized and chanted. In any case, the concept of value also fails to define a boundary, for as the boundary of every determination that appears as the boundary value of differentiation, “it translates into ecstasies of time what precedes it as difference of its own, uncatchable precondition. (ibid.: 102) The border that connects and at the same time separates the inside of capital from the outside of its truly eruptive crises represents a distinction that remains unassailable, especially when the value qua exploitation is supposed to provide for an always and everywhere of buying and selling without the existence of crises. With the border, something immeasurable, an immeasurable measure has been introduced into the economy, which above all lets the temporality crumble, which the value wants to indicate to itself. (ibid.: 94f.) With and in no period of time is it possible to positively influence the value so that, for example, the measurement of working quanta can be carried out; rather, the claim of capital to its own infinity remains inscribed in the value, without ever being able to target it or catch up with it itself. On the one hand we are referred to the fact that the value is literally nothing if it cannot circulate in and through the symbolism and math of capital as exploitation, on the other hand it refers to the concept of virtuality, to something that circulates neither as a symbol nor as an expression, to a trauma, to a ghostly approach to the Absolute, whereby just about every exterior is to be transplanted into the interior. In the processes of liquefaction, which itself permeates the structures of reality, the value of the economy, in the course of its tasteless exploitation, “wants” to permanently transplant something, in order finally to bind everything possible to the economic (capitalization) even as an ultravirus at ultra-speed, but not itself determinable or positiveable, it cannot adhere to the availability over time presupposed in the economy of measure, insofar as it neither succeeds in occupying the future *pars pro toto* nor in inventing it *pars pro toto*. As we will still see, in capitalism every attempt at planning the future by means of the calculation strategies of individual capitals fails not only because of the empiricism of difference, which exposes each individual production strategy to the risk that one remains seated on the mountains of goods produced, but also because of the difference between different futures, which Elena Esposito, for example, grasps as the difference between the present future and the future present. (Cf. Esposito 2010: 177f.) Not to mention a general plan in which quantities of goods that can be written on and overall social work would be “fairly” distributed.

The value touches on the problem of the virtual: The question of the transition from virtuality to actualization seems to be owed to a problem of representation that presupposes the object-like in virtuality as a sphere from which actualization is then to arrive quasi instantaneously as an event, whereby “arriving” inevitably evokes the question of “where from” and thus refers to the concepts of potency or determination. Harald Strauß, for example, attributes this problem to the discursive mode of representation of the theory itself, as if this sphere actually existed as a sphere, whereby a further task would then probably consist in distinguishing the presentation of the virtual, evoked in the signification system of representation, from the presentative void of value, which is filled by the *différance*. The *différance*, as a figure of an insistent postponement and thus at the same time as absent, is what the present presents, the present, and therefore cannot be present other than crossed. This could be addressed with Heidegger/Lacan as “~~strikethrough~~”. (Cf. Fuchs 2001: 109) And finally, virtuality and *différance* would have to be thought of as virtualization at the same time, whereby the virtual problematic ever raises the problem of the specific timing of time, whereas we are always dealing with actualities. Consequently, there is no virtuality (crossed out if necessary), there are only virtualizations, current virtualization current would be the right “interconnection”.

Without being able to comprehend it in detail, the concept of value has always been considered problematic in the Marxist discussion: If it is designed as a constitutive or immanently measuring measure of the equality relationship of goods qua abstract work, then in many approaches it coagulates into substance or pure work energy. (Short 2012: 192f.) It is, however, an erroneous position that the value is to be understood as an absolute substance or, optionally, as a kind of pure working energy, which cannot be regarded as kilocalories, although it would materialize or be objectified in products. If, however, the crossed-out signifier (value) cannot be defined as an ever broken concept by a one-ambiguous reference to a signified in the sense of a substance (abstract work), it would be much more likely to investigate whether a metonymic syntax of capital can be reckoned with here that prevents a fixed and immovable structure from taking place, which, for example, underlies the translations, transactions and branches of capital without ever shifting itself. At this empty space the value as an *un-jekt* would then also come into play. Completely in contrast to the concept of value logical to substance, the value would now be to be understood more as a kind of non-substance (Bockelmann), as purely immaterial, without quantity and quality, it would be presented “as an empty, material- and atom-free, purely quantified nothing”, whereby it always remains related to commodity-money-capital transactions. (Bockelmann 2006) And thus, paradoxically, according to Bockelmann, the value would be “at the same time the epitome of something, the epitome of all substances, qualities, contents” (epitome as – virtual – intrinsicness of all contents). (ibid.)

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